

## LEAN TOOLS INCREASE SALES BY REDUCING LEAD TIMES

**ABOUT EL PRADO STONE.** Champion Stone Company, LLC. is a rock quarry with six employees located in the Lueders Basin in Texas. Lueders stone is a preferred building material among architects, engineers, contractors, and masons because it is harder and denser than most other limestone types. It absorbs less water than other limestone, withstands extreme weather, and maintains its natural appearance better than other natural stones. In 2015, Champion Stone was acquired by El Prado Stone, LLP.

**THE CHALLENGE.** El Prado Stone had a vision for Champion Stone that included increasing the overall output and efficiency of the company's value-added processes: cutting, chopping, sizing, finishing, and shipping stone. The new owners reached out to TMAC, part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance in achieving their desired levels of increase in production throughput. TMAC advised Champion Stone to utilize the Lean Methodology to identify waste reduction opportunities and equipment solutions in the priority areas. The first priority area was the company's belt saw operation, which had a 14-week back log.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** TMAC performed day-long production delay studies on the belt saw operation, determining, in detail, the areas of waste impacting throughput time. Each belt saw had two independent cutting benches. The analysis revealed that set-up time was taking far too long, and was out sync with the production running time. TMAC suggested using the Lean tool of Setup Reduction or SMED (Single Minute Exchange of Dies) to address this issue. The study also revealed that during the cutting time of one bench, the second bench could be unloaded and reloaded internal to the cutting time of the first bench. TMAC worked directly with the operators to identify all the changeover process steps that needed to take place while the belt saw was cutting on the alternate bench. The process factored in downtime to allow operators to program the cutting bench prior to running the belt saw.

The Lean improvements reduced waste, decreasing the costs associated with processing and boosting productivity. Through additional training and practice, Champion Stone increased the belt saw run time by a significant margin, bringing the back log down to under four weeks. Customers appreciate the shorter lead times, positively impacting sales.

**"Not only did the increase in efficiency reduce cost, but we were able to increase sales given the shorter lead times from order to delivery."**

-George Karutz, General Partner

## RESULTS



Increased belt saw run time to over 90%, up from **60%**



Reduced back log from **14** weeks to less than 4 weeks



Improved productivity by **50%**



Reduced processing cost by **30%**

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